



STATE OF ALABAMA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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of Education

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**CLAY-CHALKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER DANA JACOBSON  
NAMED ALABAMA’S 2016-2017 TEACHER OF THE YEAR**  
*Montana Street Magnet Elementary School Teacher Dawn Davis Named Alternate TOY*



**Montgomery, Ala.** – A veteran Jefferson County School System educator who draws inspiration from teaching high school students and who values working with teachers in training because of the power to affect change is the 2016-2017 Alabama Teacher of the Year.

Dana Jacobson, who has taught English at Clay-Chalkville High School since 1999, will serve as the state’s ambassador for public education and the teaching profession throughout the upcoming school year. A graduate of Smith College and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Jacobson automatically becomes Alabama’s nominee for National Teacher of the Year.

“Teachers are visionaries who see that light at the end of the tunnel and find ways to help students get to that light,” said Jacobson, who, as the Alabama Teacher of the Year, hopes to motivate more people to enter the education field. “There’s nothing better than to see a student growing, and there’s no job to me more important than teaching because we pave the way for all sorts of possibilities for students.”

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Interim State Superintendent of Education Dr. Philip Cleveland announced Jacobson was chosen to serve as the official spokesperson and representative for teachers in Alabama for the next year near the end of a celebration honoring the 12 semi-finalists and 4 finalists who were nominated for the coveted title. The awards ceremony is held annually in recognition of these teachers' dedication to education in Alabama public schools.

Cleveland expressed his gratitude to all of the district finalists for their hard work, innovation and compassion, which he said are reflected daily in the accomplishments of their students. He said the honorees are not only role models for the students of Alabama, but for their peers as well.

Of Jacobson, Cleveland said, "Dana Jacobson exemplifies the ability of an educator to shape and change lives. She strives to connect with and engage each individual student who enters her classroom and, as such, has been able to provide meaningful, quality learning to tomorrow's leaders. We are proud to have Ms. Jacobson represent our state as the 2016-2017 Alabama Teacher of the Year."

In addition to English, Jacobson teaches ACT Prep, Debate, Speech, Creative Writing, and History of Film, among other subjects. She designs classroom activities so that students can make connections and strives to model those characteristics she believes the world requires: an interest in learning and people; a validation of others, not just tolerance; a desire to solve problems; and a strong work ethic.

Clay-Chalkville High School Principal Michael Lee said Jacobson embodies those qualities and more: "On most days, Ms. Jacobson is the first teacher at school and the last to leave. She does not stop. She is a true giver to students, student teachers, and colleagues."



**Dawn Davis, a fourth-grade teacher at Montana Street Academic Magnet School in the Dothan City School System, is the 2016-2017 Alternate State Teacher of the Year.**

The first among her siblings to go to a four-year college, Davis, who earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees in Elementary Education from Troy University, has spent most of her 20-plus years as an educator teaching in the Dothan City School System. She believes that while she cannot change the many circumstances from which her students come, she can change where they are going in life.

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Davis aims to do so by creating a classroom environment where all children realize their worth and potential, which she accomplishes through planning, building a support team, encouraging risk-taking, and utilizing her student's natural curiosity.

"My greatest rewards from teaching come in the form of a smile," Davis said. "When you see a smile cross the face of a child, you know he/she is gaining in knowledge. I am not interested in perfecting students, but I am greatly determined to perfect my abilities to encourage goal-based mindsets so that all children can realize their worth and potential."

The selection process for Alabama's Teacher of the Year begins at the school system level. Each school system can nominate an elementary and secondary teacher at the district level. One elementary teacher and one secondary teacher are selected from each of the eight state Board of Education districts. A state selection committee selects 4 teachers from the 16 district finalists to be interviewed for the titles Alabama Teacher of the Year and Alternate State Teacher of the Year.

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